

PANAMA CANAL A SUCCESS, SAYS PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

(Continued from First Page.)

and other employees who actually do the work on the canal and the railroad.

This great task has been under the control of Mr. Jackson Smith, and on the whole has been well done. At present there are some 5,000 white employees and some 10,000 colored employees on the isthmus. I went over the different places where the different kinds of employees were working; I think I saw representatives of every type both at their work and in their homes, and I conversed with probably a couple of hundred of them all told, choosing them at random from every class and including those who came especially to present certain grievances. I found that those who did not come specifically to present grievances almost invariably expressed far greater content and satisfaction with the conditions than did those who came to make complaint.

"Nearly 5,000 of the white employees had come from the United States. No man can see these young, vigorous men energetically doing their duty without a thrill of pride in them as Americans. They represent on the average a high class. Doubtless to Congress the wages paid them will seem high, but as a matter of fact the only complaint which I found had any real basis among the complaints made to me upon the isthmus was that, owing to the peculiar surroundings, the cost of living, and the distance from home, the wages were really not as high as they should be.

Every Man Wants More Pay.

"In fact, almost every man I spoke to felt that he ought to be receiving more money—a view, however, which the average man who stays at home in the United States probably likewise holds as regards himself. I append figures of the wages paid, so that the Congress can judge the matter for itself. Later I shall consider on the subject with certain representative labor men here in the United States, as well as going over with Mr. Stevens, the comparative wages paid on the Zone and at home in the United States. I then communicate my findings to the canal committee of the two houses.

"The white Americans are employed, some of them in office work, but the majority in handling the great steam shovels, as engineers and conductors on the dirt trains, as machinists in the great repair shops, as carpenters and timbers, superintendents, and foremen of divisions and of gangs, and so on and so on. Many of them have brought down their wives and families; and the children when not in school are running about and behaving as well as the American small boy and small girl behave at home. The bachelors among the employees live, sometimes in large houses; quarters being furnished free to all the men, married and unmarried. Usually the bachelors sleep two in a room, as they would do in this country. I found a few cases where three were in a room, and I was told of, although I did not see, large rooms in which four were sleeping; for it is not possible to find a room large enough to accommodate a man and his family. The system of construction camps always to provide in advance ample house room for the commission intend later to give, in one case, where the house was a hind French house with a leak in the roof, I did not think the accommodations were good.

Praise for the Womanly Wives

"But in every other case among the scores of houses I entered at random, the accommodations were good, every room was neat and clean, usually having books, magazines, and small ornaments; and, in short, just such a room as a self-respecting craftsman would be glad to live in at home. The quarters for the married people were even better. Doubtless there must be here and there a married couple who, with or without reason, are not contented with their home on the isthmus; but I never happened to strike such a couple. The wives of the steam-shovel men, engineers, machinists, and carpenters into whose houses I went, all with one accord expressed their pleasure in their home life and surroundings. Indeed, I do not think they could have done otherwise. The houses themselves were excellent, with bathroom, sitting room, piazza, and bedrooms being all that could be desired. In every house which I happened to enter the mistress of the house was evidently a good American housewife and helpmeet, who had given to the home life that touch of attractiveness which, of course, the bachelor quarters neither had nor could have.

Takes a 30-Cent Meal.

"The housewives purchase their supplies directly, or through their husbands, from the commissary stores of the commission. All to whom I spoke agreed that the supplies were excellent, and all but two stated that there was no complaint to be made; these two complained that the prices were excessive as compared to the prices in the States. On investigation I did not feel that this complaint was well founded. The married men ate at home. The unmarried men sometimes ate at private boarding houses, or private messes, but more

May Go On Commission



DR. W. C. GORGAS,
Chief of the Health Department of the Canal Zone.

often, judging by the answers of those whom I questioned, at the Government canteens or hotels where the meal costs 30 cents to each employee. This 30-cent meal struck me as being as good a meal as we get in the United States at an ordinary hotel in which a 50-cent meal is provided. Three-fourths of the men whom I questioned stated that the meals furnished at these Government hotels were good, the remaining one-fourth that they were not good. I myself took dinner at the La Boca Government hotel, no warning whatever having been given of my coming. There were two rooms, as generally in these hotels. In one the employees were allowed to dine without their coats, while in the other they had to put them on.

"The 30-cent meal included soup, native beef (which was good), mashed potatoes, peas, boiled corn, plum pudding, tea, coffee—each man having as much of each dish as he desired. On the table there was a bottle of liquid quinine tonic, which two-thirds of the guests, as I was informed, used every day. There were neat tablecloths and napkins. The men who were taking the meal at or about the same time, included railroad men, machinists, shipwrights, and members of the office force. The rooms were clean, comfortable, and airy, with mosquito screens around the beds. I was informed by some of those present that this hotel, and also the other similar hotels, were being dandied and singed. There was a piano in the room, which I was informed was used for the music on these occasions.

"My meal was excellent, and two newspaper correspondents who had been on the isthmus several days informed me that it was precisely like the meals they had been getting elsewhere at other Government hotels. One of the employees was a cousin of one of the Secret Service men who was with me, and he stated that the meals had always been good, but that after a time he grew tired of them because they seemed so much alike.

Complaint About Food Groundless.

"I came to the conclusion that, speaking generally, there was no warrant for complaint about the food. Doubtless it grows monotonous after awhile. Any man accustomed to handling large masses of men knows that some of them, even though otherwise very good men, are sure to grumble about something, and usually about their food. School boys, college boys, and boarders in boarding houses make similar complaints; so do soldiers and sailors. On this very trip, on one of the warships, a seaman came to complain to the second watch officer about the quality of the cocoa at the seamen's mess, saying that it was not sweet enough; it was pointed out to him that there was sugar on the table and he could always put it in, to which he responded that that was the cook's business and not his! I think that the complaint as to the food on the isthmus has but little more foundation than that of the sailor in question. Moreover, I was given to understand that one real cause of complaint was that at the Government hotels no liquor is served, and some of the drinking men, therefore, refused to go to them. The number of men using the Government hotels is steadily increasing."

or cook sheds had not been floored, and the sidewalks had not been put down, while in one camp bath houses were not yet up. In each case, however, every effort was being made to hurry on the construction, and I do not believe that the delays had been greater than were inevitable in such work. The laborers are accustomed to do their own cooking; but there was much complaint, especially among the bachelors, as to the quantity, and some as to the quality, of the food they got from the commissary department, especially as regards yams. On the other hand, the married men and their wives, and the more advanced among the bachelors, almost invariably expressed their selves as entirely satisfied with their treatment at the commissary stores; except that they stated that they generally could not get yams there, and had to purchase them outside.

The Problem of the Yam.

"The chief complaint was that the prices were too high. It is unavoidable that the prices should be higher than in their own homes; and after careful investigation I came to the conclusion that the chief trouble lay in the fact that the yams, plantains, and the like are rather perishable food, and are very bulky compared to the amount of nourishment they contain, so that it is costly to import them in large quantities and difficult to keep them. Nevertheless, I felt that an effort should be made to secure them a more ample supply of their favorite food, and so directed, I believe that ultimately the Government must itself feed them. I am having this matter looked into.

"I was struck by the superior comfort and respectability of the lives of the married men. It would, in my opinion, be a most admirable thing if a much larger number of the men had their wives, for with their advent all complaints about the food and cooking are almost sure to cease.

Good Words for the Y. M. C. A.

"One of the greatest needs at present is to provide amusements both for the white men and the black. The Young Men's Christian Association is trying to do good work, and should be in every way encouraged. But the Government should do the main work. I have specifically called the attention of the commission to this matter, and some-

thing has been accomplished already. Anything done for the welfare of the men adds to their efficiency, and money devoted to that purpose is therefore properly to be considered as spent in building the canal. It is imperatively necessary to provide ample recreation and amusement if the men are to be kept well and healthy. I call the special attention of Congress to this need.

"This gathering, distributing, and caring for the great force of laborers is one of the giant features of the work. That friction will from time to time occur in connection therewith is inevitable. The astonishing thing is that the work has been performed so well, and that the machinery runs so smoothly. From my own experience I am able to say that more care has been exercised in housing, feeding, and generally paying heed to the needs of the skilled mechanics and ordinary laborers in the work on this canal than is the case in the construction of new railroads or in any other similar private or public work in the United States. It is the testimony of all people competent to speak that on no other similar work anywhere in the tropics—indeed, as far as I know, anywhere else—has there been such forethought and such success achieved in providing for the needs of the men who do the work.

La Boca, Gatun, and Culebra.

"The work is now going on with a vigor and efficiency pleasant to witness. The three big problems of the canal are the La Boca dams, the Gatun dam, and the Culebra cut. The Culebra cut must be made, anyhow; but of course changes as to the dams, or at least as to the locks adjacent to the dams, may still occur. The La Boca dams offer no particular problem, the bottom material being so good that there is a practical certainty, not merely as to what can be achieved, but as to the time of achievement. The Gatun dam offers the most serious problem which we have to solve; and yet the ablest men on the isthmus believe that this problem is certain of solution along the lines proposed; although, of course, it necessitates great toil, energy, and intelligence, and although, equally, of course, there will be some little risk in connection with the work. If the huge earth dam now contemplated is thrown across from one foothill to the other we will have what is practically a low, broad, mountain ridge behind which will rise the inland lake. This artificial mountain will probably show less seepage, that is, will have greater

restraining capacity than the average natural mountain range. The exact locality of the locks at this dam—as at the other dams—is now being determined.

"In April next, Secretary Taft, with three of the ablest engineers of the country—Messrs. Noble, Stearns, and Ripley—will visit the isthmus, and the three engineers will make the final and conclusive examinations as to the exact site for each lock. Meanwhile the work is going ahead without a break.

"The Culebra cut does not offer such great risks; that is, the damage liable to occur from occasional land slips will not represent what may be called major disasters. The work will merely call for intelligence, perseverance, and executive capacity. It is, however, the work upon which most labor will have to be spent. The dams will be composed of the earth taken out of the cut and very possibly the building of the locks and dams will take even longer than the cutting in Culebra itself.

Monster Steam Shovels.

"The main work is now being done in the Culebra cut. It was striking and impressive to see the huge steam shovels in full play, the dumping trains carrying away the rock and earth they dislodged. The implements of French excavating machinery, which often stand a little way from the line of work, though of excellent construction, look like the veriest toys when compared with these new steam shovels, just as the French dumping cars seem like toy cars when compared with the long trains of huge cars, dumped by steam plows, which are now in use. This represents the enormous advance that has been made in machinery during the past quarter of a century. No doubt a quarter of a century hence this new machinery, of which we are now so proud, will similarly seem out of date, but it is certainly serving its purpose well now. The old French cars had to be entirely discarded. We still have in use a few of the more modern, but not most modern, cars, which hold but twelve yards of earth. They can be employed on certain lines with sharp curves. But the recent cars hold from twenty-five to thirty yards apiece, and use of the old clumsy methods of unloading them, a steam plow is drawn from end to end of the whole vestibule train, thus immensely economizing labor. In the rainy season the steam shovels can do but little in dirt, but they work steadily in rock and in the harder ground. There were some twenty-five at work during the time I was on the isthmus, and their tremendous power and efficiency were most impressive.

"As soon as the type of canal was decided this work began in good earnest. The rainy season will shortly be over, and then there will be an immense increase in the amount taken out; but even during the last three months, in the rainy season, steady progress is shown by the figures: In August, 242,000 cubic yards; in September, 291,000 cubic yards; and in October, 325,000 cubic yards. In October new records were established for the output of individual shovels, as well as for the tonnage haul of individual locomotives. I hope to see the growth of a healthy spirit of emulation between the different shovel and locomotive crews, just such a spirit as has grown on our battleships between the different gun crews in matters of marksmanship. Passing through the cut the amount of new work can be seen at a glance. In one place the entire side of a hill had been taken out recently by twenty-seven tons of dynamite, which were exploded at one blast. At another place I was given a Presidential salute of twenty-one charges of dynamite. On the top notch of the Culebra cut the prism is now as wide as it will be; all told the canal bed at this point has now been sunk about 20 feet below what it originally was. It will have to be sunk about 120 feet farther. Throughout the cut the drilling, blasting, shoveling, and hauling are going on with constantly increasing energy, the huge shovels being pressed up, as if they were mountain howitzers, into the most unlooked-for looking places, where they eat their way into the hillsides."

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DISTRICT PEDAGOGUES GET CHRISTMAS MONEY

Employees of the Washington public schools today received half of their salaries, and were thus enabled to make their Christmas purchases without inconvenience to their bank accounts. This was the result of an arrangement between the auditor and disbursing officer of the District, who realized that school teachers were just as anxious to go out shopping as any other looking places. Included in the number of those who signed their pay vouchers were nearly 1,700 employees of the schools including superintendents, principals, and teachers. In order to meet these vouchers \$25,000 was turned over to the officials.

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Chinese Will Be Tried In Place of Jamaicans

"Of the nineteen or twenty thousand day laborers employed on the canal, a few hundred are Spaniards," says the President. "These do excellent work. Their foremen told me that they did twice as well as the West India laborers. They keep healthy, and no difficulty is experienced with them in any way. Some Italian laborers are also employed in connection with the drilling.

"As might be expected, with labor as high priced as at present in the United States, it has not so far proved practicable to get any ordinary laborers from the United States. The American wage-workers on the isthmus are the highly paid skilled mechanics of the types mentioned previously. A steady effort is being made to secure Italians, and especially to procure more Spaniards, because of the very satisfactory results that have come from their employment; and their numbers will be increased as far as possible.

"It has not proved possible, however, to get them in anything like the numbers needed for the work, and from present appearances we shall in the main have to rely, for the ordinary unskilled work, partly upon colored laborers from the West Indies, partly upon Chinese labor.

"WORK WILL BE DONE BY ALIENS ANYWAY."

"It certainly ought to be unnecessary to point out that the American workman in the United States has no concern whatever in the question as to whether the rough work on the isthmus, which is performed by aliens in any event, is done by aliens from one country with a black skin or by aliens from another country with a yellow skin. Our business is to dig the canal as efficiently and as quickly as possible; provided always that nothing is done that is inhumane to any laborers, and nothing that interferes with the wages of or lowers the standard of living of our own workmen.

"Having in view this principle, I have arranged to try several thousand Chinese laborers. This is desirable both because we must try to find out what laborers are most efficient, and, furthermore, because we should not leave ourselves at the mercy of any one type of foreign labor. At present the great bulk of the unskilled labor on the isthmus is done by West India negroes, chiefly from Jamaica, Barbados, and the other English possessions. One of the governors of the lands in question has shown an unfriendly disposition to our work, and has thrown obstacles in the way of our getting the labor needed; and it is highly undesirable to give any outsiders the impression, however ill founded, that they are indispensable and can dictate terms to us.